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ABSTRACT

The role of state and local policymakers in creating an environment conducive to cooperation between schools and human services agencies is discussed in this educational policy bulletin. To ensure effective service delivery programs and enabling policies, policymakers must consider: (1) the qualities of collaborative service delivery programs, which are comprehensive, flexible, and family and community oriented; and (2) the nature of the policy context, which presents both obstacles and opportunities. Six policy concerns are presented, which address such issues as providing comprehensive service delivery, developing alternative funding strategies, providing family support, ensuring the quality of personnel, and providing leadership. (6 references) (LMI)

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School-Linked Services—So that Schools Can Educate and Children Can Learn Part 2

"There's no question—we're going to have to link the delivery of social services with the work of schools," asserts Tom Kemper, executive director of the Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth. "It's going to happen; it is happening. In terms of policies, we have to make it happen efficiently and effectively."

Collaborative service delivery usually occurs at the local level. Research and practice show that successful local programs do exist; they tend to share attributes of comprehensiveness, flexibility, and service to children and their families. The "real world of bureaucracies and politics," however, can often impede efforts to develop the qualities of successful programs. State and local policymakers must create an environment that enables schools and human services agencies to cooperate. They provide the regulations, resources, incentives, and leadership for local efforts. To ensure that the service delivery efforts and the enabling policies are efficient and effective, state and local policymakers need to consider (1) the qualities of successful collaborative service delivery programs and (2) the nature of the policy context in which they operate.

Successful Linkages—Comprehensiveness, Flexibility, Service

Programs that successfully coordinate services among education, social services, health, and share common qualities:

- They seek to meet the needs of a child through comprehensive service delivery.
- They treat a child as a member of a family, and the family as a member of a community so that a family unit, rather than a group of individuals, is served.
- They give program staff the time, training, and skills to build sustained, trusting relationships with children, families, and communities (Schorr, 1989).

To offer comprehensive, intensive service delivery, linkage programs operate with organizational flexibility, which may mean spanning boundaries within and among agencies. They also give high priority to delivering services to families in ways and in places that are convenient, humane, or sen-

sible to the families. The service program, then, is designed or modified to meet the needs of that community as defined by its members. Finally, comprehensive service delivery requires professionals who are skilled in case management or in other techniques of working with members of a family. "Front-line" service providers also need the discretion and the skills to be able to make decisions at the point of local service delivery. In short, successful linkage programs are comprehensive, flexible, and oriented to serve families in communities (Levitan, Magnum, & Pines, 1989; Plascencia, 1989; Schorr, 1988).

Successful programs are important, writes Schorr (1989), because "they show that *something can be done* to address social problems previously considered intractable" (p. 83). Schorr points out, however, that a mismatch exists between the qualities of successful programs and the ways in which most agencies are funded and must operate to ensure efficiency, effectiveness, and quality. Until state and local policymakers examine and address the mismatch, "successful programs will continue to flourish briefly in splendid isolation, and disappear" (p. 83).

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To come to grips with the nature of the "mismatch," researchers, policymakers, and practitioners must first examine the policy context in which they work.

The Policy Context for Linkages—Barriers & Opportunities

The policy context is...

the political system's articulation of policy goals and their translation into concrete actions through either the allocation of resources or the imposition of regulations (Shavelson, McDonnell, Oakes, eds., 1989, p. 241).

This definition recognizes that education and human services policies are enacted and implemented in a federal system in which the national, state, and local level each has its own set of policy concerns. In the current policy context, two issues challenge policymakers and practitioners who try to create, facilitate, or stimulate the development of new systems of service delivery: (1) lack of a coherent national strategy for serving youth and families and (2) piecemeal planning and programs conducted by "entrenched...bureaucracies, which are frequently working with limited resources and multiple demands" (National Governors' Association, p. 18).

Lack of a coherent national strategy. National associations have pointed out the lack of a coherent strategy for addressing the problems of the nation's children and their families. Despite some efforts, there is no integrated, national policy approach to identifying, planning for, or serving, either by prevention or intervention, children and families. There is, as a result, "convoluted and restrictive federal funding" for programs serving children (National Governors' Association, p. 18; Plascencia, 1989). Most local linkage programs are attempts to bridge the gaps in service delivery that are caused by the lack of a coherent policy approach. As local initiatives grow, many state policymakers are working to develop a policy framework to support them. State-level policymakers in Arkansas, New Mexico, and Texas, for example, have started to explore strategic approaches to policy planning and development for delivering serv-

ices to children and their families.

Piecemeal planning & programs. During the past two decades, many agencies have created programs, all with different purposes, populations, rules, funding patterns, and varying effects. Consequently, "the maze of programs is formidable" (Levitan, et al., 1989, p. 3). Furthermore, policymakers

...remain bound by the structures and strictures of existing programs. As a result day care, elder care, foster care, parental leave, child abuse, spouse abuse, substance abuse, crime, educational shortcomings, and health care challenges are addressed in a piecemeal fashion, rather than as parts of a coherent whole (p. 13).

Within and among agencies, evidence of the "structures and strictures of existing programs" include the following:

- **Categorical or discrete definitions of problems.** Categorical funding strategies give a single agency the responsibility to address one problem or one audience. Consequently, clients may need to report to more than one agency to attend to each problem or need. A 1986 report by the White House (in Levitan *et al.*, 1989), describes how a low-income family, living in a county of about half a million people, would have to apply to 18 separate organizations to receive all the assistance for which its members were eligible.
- **Distinct, and often incompatible, criteria as to who is eligible for services.** Determining participant eligibility accounts for a large percentage of administrative costs in many agencies, because of redundant or incompatible criteria. Clients forced to meet criteria of several agencies may receive duplicate services, or none at all. A youngster who has received special education services, for example, may fall between the cracks as she makes the transition from being eligible for children's services to being eligible for young adults' services.
- **Duplication and overlap of services.** The examples are many. Medicaid, Title X of the

Public Health Act, Title XX of the Social Security Act, and the Maternal and Child Health Service Block Grant all fund family planning services.

"In the real world of bureaucracies and politics," (Schorr, 1989, p. 83), such policies and practices can be impediments to achieving the traits of successful linkages. Instead, the existing policy context often results in fragmentation, inflexibility, and underservice to clients (Leviton, et al., 1989; Plascencia, 1989).

New opportunities. The Family Support Act of 1988 has created new opportunities for education and human services to overcome the impediments of the current policy context. It reflects a new philosophy that welfare systems should support families and help them become self-sufficient, not break up families and force them to be dependent on the system. The legislation mandates (1) education and basic skills training for welfare recipients, (2) expanded federal funds for child care services for parents receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), and (3) transition support as participants leave assistance programs for employment. Educators and human services agencies can work together to plan which education services will be provided, to whom they will be provided, where, and how.

Addressing Policy Concerns

Policymakers, educators, and agency professionals will need to change the way education and human services agencies do business to counteract the effects of fragmentation, inflexibility, and underservice. Indeed, much work remains to be done to ensure that school-linked services efforts will be able to sustain their momentum and become the sort of "broad-based collaboration which reaches deep into the core operations of schools and human service systems" (Levy & Copple, 1989, p. 8).

The challenge for state and local policymakers, then, is to create a policy environment that will help existing initiatives to expand and ensure that such broad-based programs are developed, sustained, and integrated into the system. Given the characteristics of successful linkage programs, and recognizing both mismatches and opportunities in

their policy context, state and local policymakers need to address the following policy concerns:

1. **Ensuring comprehensive service delivery to children and families.**
 - Create coalitions of community members and service agencies to coordinate service delivery.
 - Develop multiple policy strategies to address the interrelated problems of families.
 - Waive regulations to enable service providers to be able to mobilize the resources needed to serve a child or its family.
2. **Developing alternative funding strategies.**
 - Create strategies that are not categorical.
 - Create structures to use existing state and federal monies, e.g., Medicaid, AFDC, JTPA.
 - Promote cost-sharing among participants of linkage programs, e.g., "reposition" staff from one agency to another or to the school.
 - Promote funding arrangements with members of the private sector.
3. **Providing family support.**
 - Develop policies that are aimed at helping more than one generation in families.
 - Develop policies that help children and family members transition from receiving support to being self-sufficient.
 - Promote policies and service delivery strategies that treat children and families as partners, e.g., taking lessons from the special education arena in using individualized family service plans.
4. **Ensuring that programs are staffed with qualified personnel.**
 - Develop regulations that guarantee standards of quality in teacher/service provider preservice training and qualifications.
 - Promote staff development opportunities for current teachers/service providers to learn techniques such as case management.
5. **Providing leadership in developing a broad base of local support.**
 - Support coalitions of parents, community residents, corporations, foundations to

plan, implement, advise, and evaluate their own linkage programs.

- Promote the development or adaptation of better ways of demonstrating outcome-based results of linkage programs.

6. Providing leadership in interagency collaborations.

- Establish state-level coalitions of agencies, teachers, parents, students, private sector, foundations to plan and evaluate strategic policy approaches that will provide a supportive framework for local efforts.
- Establish information systems for sharing information and data for planning.

The next issue of INSIGHTS will discuss these six policy concerns in greater detail.

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